Washington State Department of Transportation
Public Transportation and Rail Division
Office of Transit Mobility

Grant Technical Work Group Meeting
WSDOT Urban Planning Office

August 9, 2005
9:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Attendees
Brad Windler (Ben Franklin Transit); Charlie Shell (City of Seattle); Lynda David (RTC); Jeanette Johnson (Community Transit); Karen Richter (PSRC); Lisa Wolterink (Sound Transit); Mike Harbour (Intercity Transit); Patricia Levine (Pierce Transit); Dave Morrison (King County Metro); Peter Thein (WSTA); Stephanie Tax, Theresa Smith, Janice Hamil (WSDOT).

Recap
Theresa briefly went over the legislative intent and reasons for the Grant Technical Work Group and the Advisory Committee for those who weren't at the last meeting.

She passed on the Advisory Committee's thanks for work well done to the Grant Technical Work Group.

Goal of Today's Meeting
To streamline the grant application questions to avoid complexity and duplication.

Discussion: General
Committee members posed questions about
- the length of the essay,
- whether the financial data should be presented the same way by each applicant,
- what specific changes were made by the Advisory Committee,
- whether the grant criteria will correlate to the questions that generate the essays

Essay length
Four to five questions to generate four to five essay pages

Financial data
Using the quarterly reporting format would make it easier on everyone – applicants will know what they have to track and we will be able to break out their

requests more clearly as we can compare them side-by-side. We don't want financial data in essay form, but we do want numbers that make sense.

Specific changes made by Advisory Committee

The AC was concerned about specific outcome descriptions and how to measure them. They also wanted to ensure that system integration/multi-modal issues were made a very high priority, since they are mentioned specifically in the legislation.

The Grant Criteria and Essay Questions need to correlate

Both groups are in agreement that the essays need to address the specific legislation and grant criteria, so the questions need to guide applicants towards answering that way. Although the Grant Technical Work Group was hesitant to request too much supporting documentation, the AC was fine with it.

Discussion: Questions vs. Criteria

The committee members discussed the grant application questions and criteria. They determined the questions needed to be collapsed to eliminate redundancy in the applications. They also felt it might be useful to compare the criteria to the questions to make sure they correlate and to review the "Safe Routes to Schools" and PSRC grant questions to avoid reinventing the wheel.

We have to use the agency reporting form; so using some variation of it in the application process would be useful.

Several other questions were posed by committee members including:

- Why don't we have a question asking how much money they are requesting?
- Should we give weighting to matching funds?
- Should we have an upper limit on the amount of project funds requested?

Revisions to Grant Application Questions

1. What is the project and why are you pursuing the project?
    a. Describe the project and attach a one-page project map.
    b. What problem will the project solve and what is the expected outcome
    c. How much money are you requesting?
    d. Describe specifically what the grant funds will be used for.
    e. How does this project tie into current regional/local planning?

2. What is the problem you are trying to solve and what are the current and forecasted trends?
    a. Describe the performance, congestion and delay in the corridor and its impact on any existing public transportation services, as well as any future forecasted demands and/or trends.
    b. Attach land use, CMS or other transportation planning maps and identify significant destination centers.

(Define congested corridor and use language from legislation to flesh out some of these questions? How about person hours of delay and level of service? What are our definitions?)

3. What benefits do you expect from this project?
    a. How will this project improve overall system performance in the corridor and on public transportation, including multimodal options?
    b. How will this project improve system integration to multiple modes, including public transportation services, pedestrian/bicycle facilities and ferries and how do you plan to demonstrate coordination and system integration improvements?
    c. How do you plan to partner or group this project with other projects in this region?
    d. Describe how coordination will benefit this project.

(Discussion on partnership language – the idea is to make sure there isn't any duplication, but letters will swamp the review committee and might take too long to obtain. Local jurisdictions just have to work with transit agencies –the legislation is clear on that point.)

4. How would you measure the success of the project?
    a. Describe how you plan to measure success of the project including both quantitative and qualitative measures (order of magnitude). For example, what is the expected improvement of person delay or person throughput associated with the project?

(Do we need to address the benefit of the project? Is it a long-term benefit or a spot fix? Do we care? Spot fixes will reduce congestion NOW, and are more likely to cost less. Maybe the intent is spot fixes, given the low dollar amount of the legislation. Suggestion to add two questions: Do benefits persist after project? Does the project require ongoing funding after initial project is complete?)

5. What is the financial plan for the project?
    a. Describe the financial plan for both capital and operational costs needed to complete the project.
    b. Are there supportive partners involved in this project? Are there financial partners? Describe the project lead and co-lead.
    c. All available or leveraged funds should be identified.
    d. What is the plan for sustainability of the project/investment? Describe your plans to continue the project into the future.

6. What is the timeline for the project?
    a. Describe the readiness of the project and whether the project is ready to implement.

b. Describe the project schedule.
c. Describe the schedule associated with the issuance of necessary permits.

7. Other relevant information
   a. Is there any additional information that should be considered of value to the application?

Discussion: Grant Applications
The committee members expressed various concerns and thoughts related to the grant applications including:

- Baselines will be hard to compare between requests.
- We should try to avoid formula-driven numbers.
- We need to include definitions or examples,
- We should define: order of magnitude or percentage for measures.
- We really need to communicate the "return on investment" information to the Legislature – how do we get that out of the applicants without saying that?
- We need to define which questions are mandatory and which are optional. We should also be clear on what the thresholds are.
- We need to keep focusing on continuity and multimodal integration (transit priority). The idea is how can we eke out a little bit more capacity on congested roadways via transit – a key point of the legislation.
- We need to make it clear to applicants that the application questions are related to the criteria.

The committee asked if it would be possible to eliminate bad projects from the list. Based on the legislation all project proposals are required to be on the list submitted to the legislature.

Discussion: When the Applications are Received

Visuals are good. Have project sponsors submit visual depictions or maps of the project with a one-two sentence project description that can be forwarded to the Legislature with the list of projects – this will save time in preparing materials for the Legislature.

During the proposal evaluations, we could assign at least two people with expertise to each criterion for consistency in evaluation of applications. We also need to be aware of the perception of the credibility of our ratings – for instance we can't end up scoring projects from our own agencies.

The credibility and integrity of our process will be key since our ratings will be under the microscope.

Wrap - up
Weighting of the criteria needs to be given careful thought – the group will need to meet again to finalize the questions and determine how to weight the criteria when everyone has a chance to see how they are laid out after the revisions from today's meeting. This might need to occur at the joint meeting

The next Grant Technical Work Group meeting will be August 16, at 9:30 a.m. in the same location, or via conference call.